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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT
FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY

U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Monday, September 25, 1944

Subject: Apples - Dry for Variety

Information from the Bureau of Human
Nutrition and Home Economics, U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

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A bigger crop of apples than we had last year. That's the good news from America's orchards. You'll have all the apples you need for lunch boxes, salads, sauces and pies, and for jellies, mincemeat and apple butter. Apples to can, wither sliced or as sauce. But if you want to put up some apples without canning and without sugar, take a tip from home economists of the United States Department of Agriculture and dry some apples.

During these war years, many homemakers have found that oven drying is one good way to care for fruits and vegetables that are seasonally abundant. And as every smart housewife knows, dried fruits are one of the magic foods of the kitchen. A clever cook can take them, dry and wrinkled as they are, and change them into a tempting hot dish or a tasty fruit dessert. Dried apples can be used in countless ways to brighten up other dishes too.

If you have a gas or electric range, one of fall's first chill days is a good time to dry apples in your oven.

Equipment for drying? Well, you'll need trays on which to spread the fruit in your oven, a sharp paring knife and a thermometer.

The trays are simply wooden frames covered with a curtain netting or wire mesh. You can buy them in many department stores, or you can make your own.

Be sure the trays fit your oven - that is - each frame needs to be an inch and a half smaller than the oven's inside length and width, so there'll be space for the air to circulate. The average oven will hold four of these trays.

For good dried apples, start with ripe, sound fresh fruit. Apples just right for eating. Decay in one slice may give a bad flavor to a whole trayful.

Oven-drying is small scale drying. Work in small batches - from 4 to 8 pounds of apples at a time, and preferably not more than 6 pounds because that's about what an oven can take. Peel and core the apples and cut in slices or rings a quarter of an inch thick.

Light-colored fruit tends to darken. You can prevent this by sulfuring the apples. A simple way to sulfur the fruit is to soak it for 15 minutes in a solution of sodium sulfite and water. Use 3-1/2 tablespoons of the sodium sulfite to a gallon of water. I'll repeat that formula. Soak the apples for 15 minutes in a solution of sodium sulfite and water. It takes 3-1/2 tablespoons of sodium sulfite to a gallon of water. And don't be concerned if the apples have a strong sulfur odor and taste when they're dried. This will come out during the cooking.

Spread the slices or rings of apples evenly on the tray, not more than half an inch deep. The lighter the load, the faster the fruit will dry. So, don't crowd the trays. Not more than two pounds to the tray. A lighter load is preferable.

Two things to keep in mind when you're drying fruit. First, keep the temperature low. Second, see that the air in the oven circulates freely. And, watch the oven like the proverbial hawk. You'll need to shift the trays around, since the temperature and air flow won't be the same everywhere in the oven. And you'll have to watch that the flame doesn't go out - if you're using a gas range.

Proper temperature for oven drying is 150 degrees Fahrenheit. To maintain this temperature, set your oven at the lowest point on the regulator - or if your gas range has no regulator, turn the flame on very low. Prop the door open. A folded pot holder tucked in the top of the door will serve for an electric range. Use a stick of wood to prop the gas oven door open about 8 inches at the top.

Propping the door open helps control the heat and lets the moist air out. It'll take 6 hours or longer for the apples to dry to the proper pliable, springy feel. They should be creamy white in color.

When they're dried, cool the apples and package them at once. You'll find that your glass jars are suitable containers for dried fruit. Or you may pack the apples in old coffee cans or other tins with tight lids. Just be sure to see that the lid is tightly sealed with adhesive tape or cloth dipped in paraffin to keep the air out. Waxed paper cartons are another possibility.

It pays to package dried fruit in fairly small quantities because you can use small packets more handily. Roughly, 1 to 2 cups of dried food serves 6. Another point, dried fruit is best soon after opening. And you don't expose the whole lot to air and possible dampness when you take out a little. Dark storage dried food keep its color and flavor, so store in a dry, cool place.

Food specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture have prepared a folder on oven drying that tells how to dry food in an electric or gas oven and gives a drying table for fruits and vegetables. You may get a copy of this folder by writing the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. Ask for the bulletin on oven drying.

